

*Celebrating the Life
of*

Bernice Maxwell Cross



Monday, April 4, 2011

11:00 AM

Grace Presbyterian Church

**153 Grove Street
Montclair, New Jersey**

Pastor Paul Leggett ~ Officiant

Obituary

When **Bernice Maxwell Cross** finally decided to retire in 2004 after more than six decades at The Star-Ledger, everyone knew she couldn't make an ordinary entrance into her farewell party.

So the newspaper rented a lavish sedan chair and Mrs. Cross was hoisted into the air by four men and paraded into the party like Cleopatra.

"She was sitting and waving," said Delorian Welch, one of her best friends. "She adored that party. She adored every party."

Mrs. Cross, a lifelong newspaper employee who friends lovingly described as an incurable diva who lived life to the fullest, died Monday in her sleep of natural causes. She was 93.

Born in Newark, friends said Mrs. Cross sang in choirs, traveled the world, met Pope John Paul II, amassed an impressive collection of gowns and threw herself more parties than anyone could count.

"She was a diva all the way. She loved glamour," said Iris Taylor, a longtime friend and former Star-Ledger business reporter. "She just lived this really charmed life that was different than the rest of us."

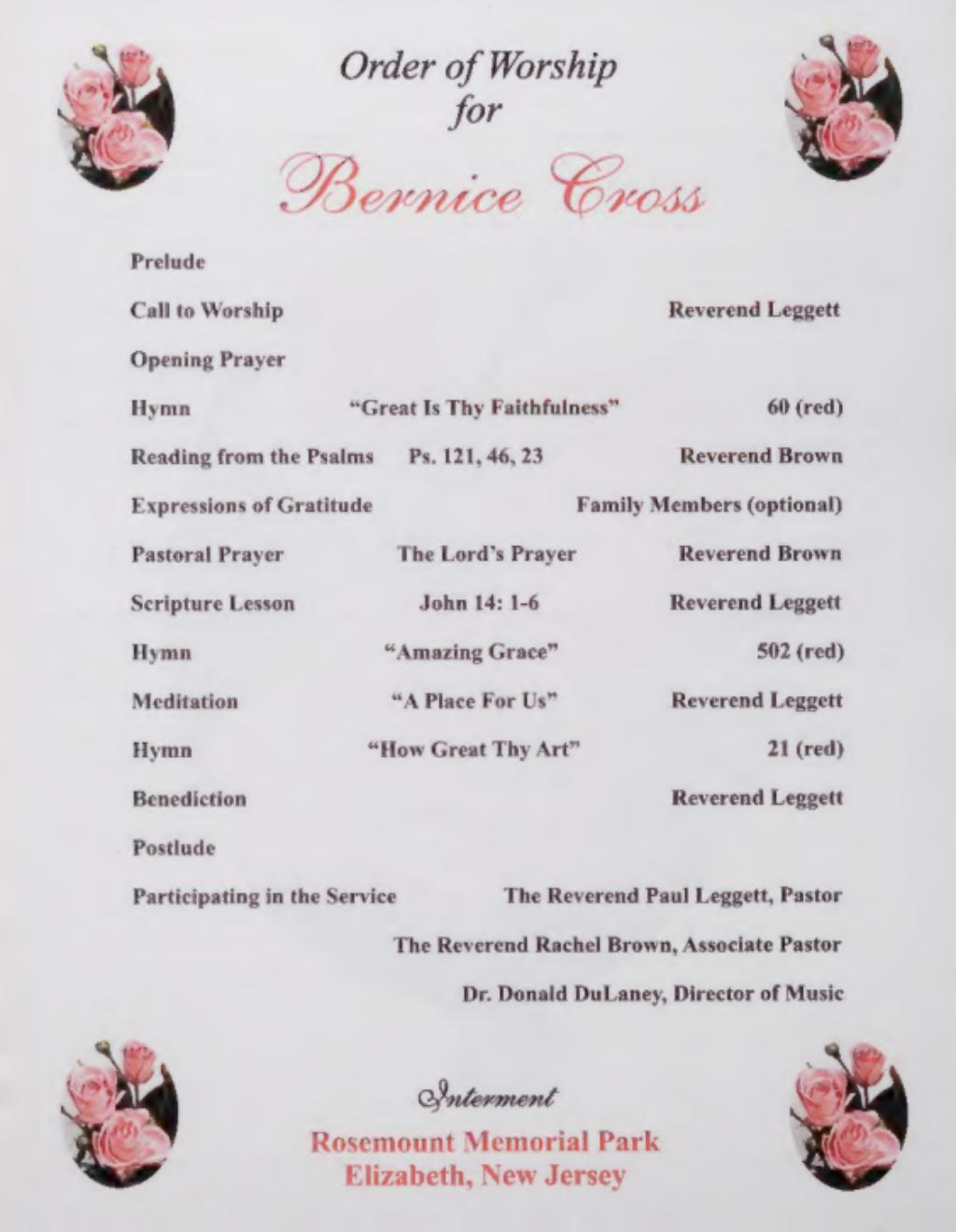
Mrs. Cross the daughter of Bessie Harris Maxwell and William Hunter Maxwell. She graduated from Newark's Weequahic High School and Essex County Vocational School and served on the youth council of the NAACP, according to a handwritten biography she wrote about her life.

She joined the editorial staff of The Star-Ledger in 1939, the year the Newark Ledger and the Star-Eagle merged to create the newly renamed paper. Over her decades in the newsroom, Mrs. Cross helped coordinate the publication of movie and television listings, the comics and syndicated features columnists. She also served as a receptionist, answering readers' calls.

Her brother, Sherman "Jocko" Maxwell, was also in journalism. He wrote about Negro League baseball for local newspapers. He also began broadcasting games on the radio in 1929 and is credited by some sports historians as the first black sports broadcaster. He died in 1998 at age 100.

"He was turned down over 25 times, but he kept on trying to get hired," Mrs. Cross said in a 1998 Star-Ledger story about her brother. "He never gave up."

Mrs. Cross was single until her early 50's, when she married the late John Cross. She became stepmother to his son, John Cross, Jr. She also served as godmother to the children of several friends.



Order of Worship for

Bernice Cross

Prelude

Call to Worship

Reverend Leggett

Opening Prayer

Hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" 60 (red)

Reading from the Psalms Ps. 121, 46, 23 Reverend Brown

Expressions of Gratitude Family Members (optional)

Pastoral Prayer The Lord's Prayer Reverend Brown

Scripture Lesson John 14: 1-6 Reverend Leggett

Hymn "Amazing Grace" 502 (red)

Meditation "A Place For Us" Reverend Leggett

Hymn "How Great Thy Art" 21 (red)

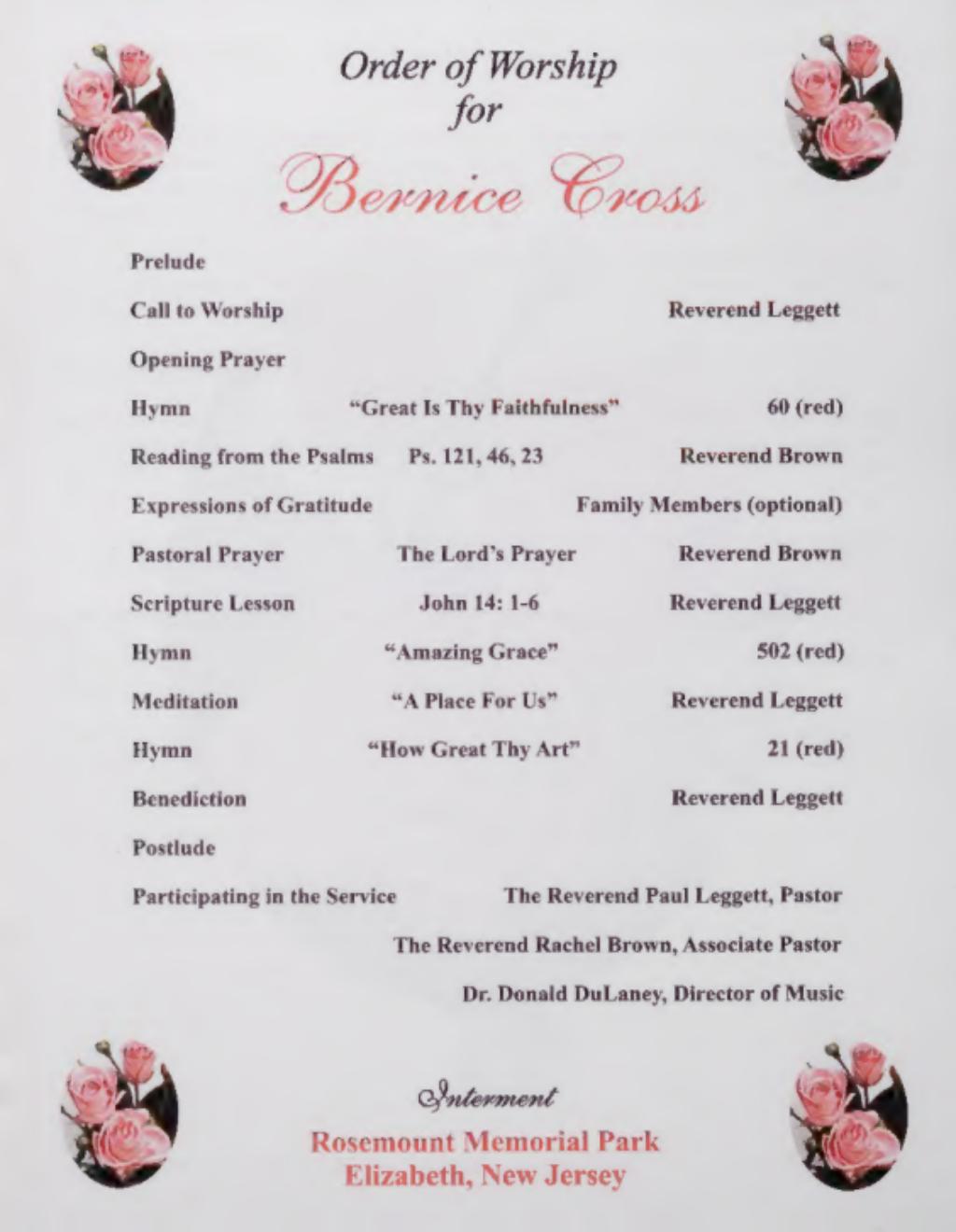
Benediction Reverend Leggett

Postlude

Participating in the Service The Reverend Paul Leggett, Pastor

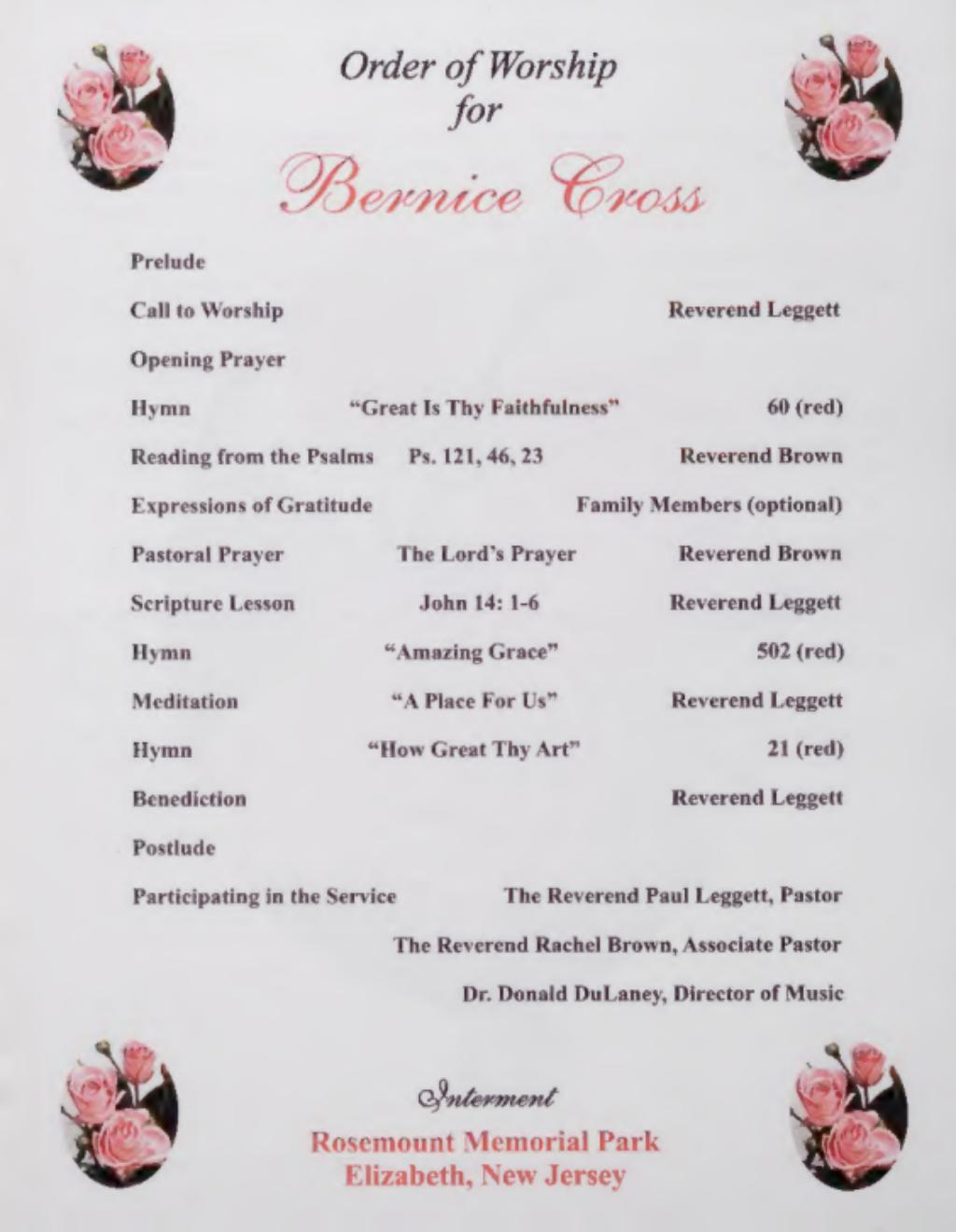
The Reverend Rachel Brown, Associate Pastor

Dr. Donald DuLaney, Director of Music



Interment

Rosemount Memorial Park
Elizabeth, New Jersey





Obituary

Over the years, Mrs. Cross became an accomplished singer. She studied music with teachers in Montclair and New York. She was a soprano soloist at the 13th Avenue Presbyterian Church in Newark. Though she was not Catholic, she was also a longtime member of the choir at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark.

She was singing at Sacred Heart when Pope John Paul II stopped to shake her hand on live television during his 1995 visit to Newark. Friends took her handshake with the Pope as further proof Mrs. Cross was living a charmed life.

"That was not even her church. That was not even her religion!" Said Taylor, her friend.

In her later years, Mrs. Cross never stopped traveling, taking trips to Russia, Egypt, Thailand, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Singapore. She also threw herself elaborate birthday parties every five years at Tavern on the Green in New York, the Manor in West Orange and other venues. They always featured live music, dancing and 100 or more guests.

Mrs. Cross recently put down an early deposit at an Essex County restaurant, intending to host a 95th birthday party her herself in the summer of 2012.

"She wanted the best she could afford," said Welch, her friends. "She loved a party."

Mrs. Cross was preceded in death by her parents, Bessie Harris Maxwell and William Hunter Maxwell, her brother Sherman "Jocko" Maxwell.

She leaves to cherish her memories her stepson, John Cross Jr.; Nephew, Bruce Maxwell; Devoted Friends, Jackie Burke, Mildred Dixon and Delorian Welch; God-Children, Rosa Marie Jackson, Nysha, Carlos, Sonya; Care-giver, Elizabeth Marquez.

She will be deeply missed.



God Saw You Getting Tired

*God saw you getting tired
and a cure was not to be.
So He put His arms around you
and whispered,
"Come to Me."
With tearful eyes we watched you
and saw you pass away.
We love you dearly,
but we could not ask you to
stay any longer for us.
A golden heart stopped beating
and hard-working hands at rest,
God broke our hearts to prove to us that
He only takes the best.*

Acknowledgments

*The family of the late Bernice Maxwell Cross
acknowledges with deep appreciation all acts of kindness
extended to them during this bereavement hour.
God bless you all for your thoughtfulness and concern.*

The Cross Family

"A service that is always remembered"

Whigham Funeral Home

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